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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 002081

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STATE FOR P, EUR, NEA, PM, IO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/22/2016  
TAGS: MARR MOPS PREL LE NL  
SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/LEBANON: DUTCH TO CONTRIBUTE FRIGATE  
TO UNIFIL

Classified By: POLCOUNS Andrew Schofer for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Dutch Defense Minister Henk Kamp announced September 22 that the GONL intends to contribute a 150-person frigate to the maritime component of UNIFIL. Kamp made the announcement following the weekly Cabinet meeting, noting that the Dutch were satisfied with the rules of engagement and intend to deploy through the end of the mission's August 31, 2007 mandate. According to MFA sources, however, some concerns remain, including oversight of boarding parties. The GONL will submit a letter to Parliament informing it of the deployment decision; Parliament will debate the deployment in two weeks time, but is not expected to oppose the mission. End summary.

¶2. (C) Kamp said the Dutch will contribute both a frigate and supply ship to the maritime component of UNIFIL, and intend to deploy through the end of UNSCR 1701's mandate on August 31, 2007. MFA Deputy Director for Conflict Prevention Joop Nijssen told polmiloff September 21 that the Dutch will initially deploy a 150-person frigate for four months, followed by a supply ship for three months, and then a frigate again for the last four months. He added the GONL will evaluate its deployment in four months to determine if any mission revisions are necessary.

¶3. (C) Kamp said the GONL was satisfied with the "robust" rules of engagement, but hinted at the need for additional clarification regarding some procedures. For example, Nijssen said the Dutch are concerned by the Lebanese government's insistence that any boarding operation be led by Lebanese officers in Lebanese territorial waters. While some compromise might be necessary in practice, he suggested, Dutch special forces should be able to conduct their own boarding operations. He did not rule out the possibility of having Lebanese officers attend such operations, however.

¶4. (C) NOTE: The GONL will submit an "Article 100" letter to Parliament informing it of the Dutch deployment overseas. Following the debate on Afghanistan, Parliament has taken a more aggressive role in asserting itself into the notification process in an "approving" capacity. We do not expect any problems this time around -- most parties agree that UNIFIL is a good cause and helps build European unity. However, with the Dutch parliamentary elections rapidly approaching, a minority may see opportunities in opposing the mission. Nijssen expected parliamentary debate within two weeks time. End note.

ARNALL